



**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
February 24, 2014**

Testimony Submitted by Richard Porth, United Way of Connecticut

My name is Richard Porth and I serve as CEO of United Way of Connecticut. This testimony is provided in enthusiastic support for Governor's Bill No. 25, An Act Establishing the Office of Early Childhood. This testimony is provided on behalf of Connecticut's sixteen United Ways, serving cities and towns across the state of Connecticut.

Connecticut's fifteen local United Ways have a long history of providing support for local early childhood programs. In FY 13, local United Ways invested more than \$4.2 million in funding for early childhood, supporting a range of initiatives and activities from additional early care slots to early care quality improvement initiatives and more. United Way of Connecticut serves as the state organization for the fifteen local United Ways. United Way of Connecticut also partners with the state to help provide multiple integrated and synergistic early childhood services, including 2-1-1 Child Care (Connecticut's child care resource and referral agency), Child Development Infoline (a main access point for parents seeking help from Help Me Grow and Birth to Three) and Care 4 Kids (child care subsidy program).

United Ways have long recognized the importance of quality early care and education. Our own experience as early childhood funders and service providers convinces us of the value of good collaboration locally and statewide in the delivery of these crucial services.

We applaud the Governor, the legislature's champions of early care and education and the leadership of the Office of Early Childhood for the progress already achieved –making more early care and education slots available, in particular for at-risk children, promoting quality enhancements in early care and education, and encouraging good collaboration at the state and local level among the various components of the early childhood system in Connecticut.

And we respectfully request that the legislature formally authorize the establishment of the new Office of Early Childhood as soon as possible.

Connecticut's United Ways pledge to support the new Office of Early Childhood and its efforts to better coordinate the work done by the many different entities engaged in the early childhood system. And we support the new Office of Early Childhood and its strong leadership as it maps out strategies to achieve consistent quality in early care and education at the state level and in our communities. Ultimately, the Office of Early Childhood's success in this endeavor will reap substantial benefit for thousands of children and their families across Connecticut.

Thank you.